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ABSTRACT

In Holland over the past few years there have appeared several research reports paying attention to the difficult working conditions of teachers. A problem with these reports is that it is not clear to what extent the problems described are more serious than in other places; for example, among people working in different professions or among teachers in other countries. The research project reported here concerns both these aspects: comparability with different professions, and teachers in other countries. For the comparison with other professions, former teachers were chosen who worked for some time as teachers in secondary education and who changed their jobs. Because the project is in its early stages, the comparison with teachers in other countries is limited in this report to some provisional results of a comparison between Dutch and German teachers. A description is given of how job satisfaction was measured, and what factors were taken into consideration in comparing the job satisfaction of teachers and the job satisfaction of former teachers who switched to other professions. A comparison was also made between the amount of stress experienced by current teachers and those who have left the profession for other fields. A discussion is presented on the value of research on this topic and how comparative studies can contribute to the improvement of the working conditions of teachers. A job satisfaction test for teachers is appended. (JD)

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JOB SATISFACTION AND STRESS AMONG TEACHERS
A COMPARATIVE STUDY

L.G.M. Prick & B. Hantelmann

1. Introduction

When teachers have the opportunity to pass on their knowledge, see results from their work, have the feeling they achieve something with their teaching, contribute to the knowledge and development of the pupils etcetera, then it is almost certain that the teacher is satisfied with his job. Therefore, one may assume that the job satisfaction among teachers is an important indication for the quality of the work they do.
It is no coincidence then, that over the past few years the following two problems have come to be the centre of educational policy in the entire Western world: the concern for the level of education, and the concern with job satisfaction, the working conditions and the quality of teachers. This connection between the level of education and the position of teachers is also explicitly made in the United States. In 1983 there appeared in this country **A nation at risk**, an alarming report about the quality of American education. The most important consequences drawn from this report concerned the area of improving the quality of teachers.
Illustrative within this context is a report which appeared in 1985 by the California Commission On The Teaching Profession. Its title is: Who will teach our children, and its subtitle: A Strategy For Improving California's Schools.

In Holland over the past few years there have appeared several (research) reports, paying attention to the difficult working conditions of teachers (Prick, 1983 and 1985; Veerman e.a., 1984; NGL, 1985; Van Ginkel, 1985; Smeets & Buis, 1986). A problem with these reports is, that it is not clear to which extent the problems describes there are more serious than in other places; for example among people working in different professions or among teachers in other countries.
To fill this gap, a research project was started concerning both these aspects: comparability with a) different professions and b) teachers in other countries.
For the comparison with other professions we chose former teachers, men and women who for some time worked as teachers in secondary education, and who changed their job for a - paid - job elsewhere. A justification of the choice of this category as a basis for comparison can

be found in paragraph 3. In the same paragraph the results are given and commented on.
Concerning the comparison with teachers in other countries: this project is still in an early stage. Therefore we will limit ourselves to a justification of the underlying design (par. 4) and some provisional results concerning a comparison between Dutch and German teachers.
Before proceeding with the comparison, we would like to make some remarks concerning the relative character of the concept of job satisfaction and how we measured it.

2. Measuring job satisfaction

We know from research that people appear to be satisfied about their house, car, job, husband or wife, etc. This phenomenon is usually explained by the fact that these sort of 'possessions' are not easily replaced. When that is the given situation, the best thing to do is be satisfied with it, people seem to reason (De Swaan, 1971).
This explains why research into job satisfaction shows that people are quite satisfied with their jobs. When one wants to know more about the job satisfaction of a certain category of working people, the question is not **whether** the persons involved are satisfied, but the **extent** to which they are satisfied.
To investigate this however, is not as simple as it might seem. The degree of satisfaction that one will find in an investigation is closely connected with the way the questions are put. We will illustrate this with the following statements:

I am really very satisfied with my job
I am very satisfied with my job
I am satisfied with my job
I am fairly satisfied with my job
In general I am fairly satisfied with my job.

Because these statements become gradually less definite, the reaction to these statements will gradually be more positive. Suppose an investigator were to use the following 5-point scale:

disagree	1	2	3	4	5	agree

In that case it is possible that someone will react to the first statement with a score of 3 and to the last statement with a 5. In other words, the extent in which one is satisfied with one's work is closely connected with the manner in which this satisfaction is questioned. Therefore, in an absolute sense we can say little or nothing about job satisfaction among teachers - which is the group we are concerned with. Any statements we do make concerning job satisfaction of this professional group, will be made in a relative, comparative sense.

Another problem regards the fact that we limited ourselves to one item. The objection one can make against this procedure is that a test is more reliable when the number of items - within reasonable limits - is

expanded. The reason why we nonetheless opted for only one item was that the job satisfaction test[1] was especially constructed for teachers, with items such as 'I sometimes regret having become a teacher'. This made it impossible to present this test to **former** teachers. So we decided to pick one - professionally neutral - item from this test, which is often used for measuring job satisfaction: 'I am very satisfied with my profession'. In the 14-item test for teachers, of which the reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was .89, this item had a Rir of .74. This means that this one item is a reasonably reliable measure for job satisfaction. We find a comparable result in Merz (1979). The Rit (which is by definition higher than the Rir) of the item 'Ich bin mit meinem Beruf sehr zufrieden' amounts to .83 in his test, which also consists of 14 items. Krampen (1978) therefore considers it justified to measure job satisfaction in his research among German teachers by means of one such item.

3. Comparison with former teachers

Justification of the choice

For the comparison of job satisfaction among teachers, we searched for a group closely related to the profession of teacher as far as educational background is concerned, but not actually practising the profession of teacher. It would have been possible to compare teachers with for instance doctors, lawyers or people from the trade and industry. The objection to such a choice is that these people not only distinguish themselves from teachers by the work they do, but also because they chose a different vocational training in the past.
It appears for instance that future teachers in Holland do not let themselves be guided in their study choice by the profession, but by an interest in a certain subject such as English or History (Prick, 1983). Research in Germany shows that there the choice for the teaching profession is motivated by the need for 'amtliche Versicherung', the safe prospect of a job with the government (Niemann, 1970). For reasons such as these it is preferable to compare teachers with people who in the past chose the same sort of vocational training, but who have a different job than teaching. It is obvious that former teachers conform to these requirement the best. Added to this is the fact that former teachers in the majority of cases appear to work in 'lehrerverwandte Berufe', such as for instance in the field of inservice training of teachers, test construction and curriculum development, and that their salary is also about the same.

There are a number of objections to be made against the choice of former teachers as comparative material. A first objection concerns the supposition that teachers who chose a different job probably did this because they no longer wanted to do the work of a teacher. In other words, their job satisfaction will probably have been relatively low. It is the question whether this is true. An investigation into the motives of why teachers leave their profession, showed that this was mainly connected with the opinions of their social environment. When their partner, friends, acquaintances etc., appeared to have little

appreciation for the profession of teacher, the chance that the person involved moved on to a different job, was very high.
The question whether this person enjoyed being a teacher, hardly had any influence on his choice (Erickson, 1968).
Other research shows that the question whether teachers leave their job, is strongly connected with the age in which there are job alternatives (Prick, 1983). Kob (1958) found that in Germany the job of teacher was an 'Aufstiegsberuf', dependent on the subject one taught, and not on the question whether one enjoyed the work. An important motive for the choice to become a teacher appears to be the possibility to work part-time.

The above shows that there are many motives to either stay in or leave education, none of which show any connection with the question whether one enjoys the work one does. Which however does not preclude that this factor might play a role. If this is the case, we must ask ourselves the question what this role could be. When the satisfaction with the work plays a part in the decision to leave education, then the influence of this factor is probably as follows: teachers who enjoy their work, will sooner stay teaching than those who do not enjoy their work. The result of this development will be that the job satisfaction of the remaining teachers will become higher.
The - supposed - relatively low job satisfaction of the teachers who leave is probably not only connected with the work, but also with the personality traits of the people involved: in general they are not quickly satisfied with the situation in which they find themselves and this concerns - among other things - their work. For the comparison of job satisfaction between teachers and former teachers, this means the following.

The transition of a part of the teachers to a different profession has a positive influence on the average job satisfaction of the remaining teachers, and supposes a relatively low satisfaction among the leaving teachers. The mechanism outlined here, means - when comparing satisfaction between teachers and former teachers - that the job satisfaction of the first will be influenced positively by this, and that of the latter negatively.

Concluding

In the following the job satisfaction of teachers is compared with that of former teachers. There are a number of arguments why we decided to give preference to this 'professional category'.

- their vocational training is the same as that of teachers;
- their initial choice of profession is similar to that of teachers;
- their professional experience is partly the same as that of teachers and
- in as far as their professional choice differs in a later stadium, this is connected with whether there are professional alternatives at the right moment;

- in so far as there is a connection between teachers leaving education and their satisfaction with their job, the influence of this on the level of job satisfaction will be positive for teachers and negative for former teachers.

Results

The group of former teachers consisted of 165 teachers, of whom 23 were women. Because the number of women was too small for a detailed comparison the results of this group are only mentioned roughly.
The data concerning the former teachers were collected over the period 1983-1985 and compared with the job satisfaction scores of teachers gathered in 1983 (Prick, 1985). In this latter investigation there appeared to be a clear connection between age and job satisfaction. Because of this, the results of both samples were corrected for differences in distribution of the respondents over different age groups. Because of the small number of older teachers, participants of 56 years and older were left out of account.

Job satisfaction

A total of 5 questions were submitted to the former teachers, of which the text - and also the typography - was literally the same as the questions submitted earlier to the teachers. For the sake of a clearly structured presentation we only present the reactions on 2 statements. The first concerns job satisfaction and reads as follows: 'I am very satisfied with my profession'.
The following table shows the scores of teachers and former teachers on the statement 'I am very satisfied with my profession'. The number of respondents are mentioned between brackets.

Table 1

	I	II	III
Age	- 35	36 - 45	46 - 55
Teachers	3.5	3.4	3.3
	(628)	(533)	(259)
Formers teachers	3.9	3.8	4.0
	(34)	(64)	(44)

The transposition of table 1 into a diagram gives the following picture:

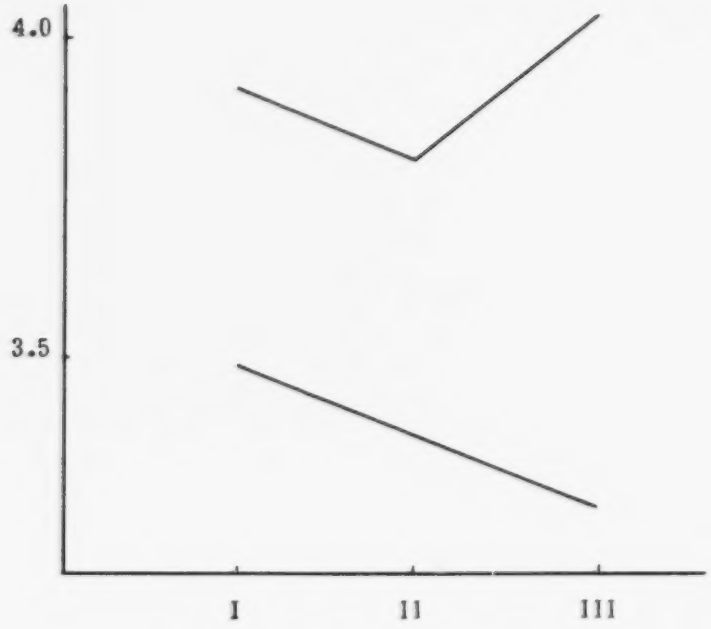

Diagram 1: reactions of teachers and former teachers to the statement 'I am very satisfied with my profession'.

Overall, the job satisfaction of teachers seems to be clearly lower than that of their former colleagues. The difference is especially notable among the highest age group, those between 46 and 55 years of age.
In publications about job satisfaction research it is often said that the results in general are on the level of about 80% of the highest score (Dunnette, 1976).
When we apply that to this research, we find exactly this 'regular' score among former teachers between 46-55 years of age. The teachers however score considerably lower. With their score of 3.3 they achieve 66% of the highest possible score.

Stress

It is often said about the teaching profession that the teacher is exposed to a lot of tensions as a result of his role as an individual in front of a group. To get an idea of the extent in which these tensions have their effect on a persons general well-being, the participants were asked to respond to the following statement: 'Lately I feel more tensed than a few years ago'.

The following table shows the scores of teachers and former teachers on the statement 'Lately I feel more tensed than a few years ago' (for numbers see table 1)

Table 2

	I	II	III
Age	- 35	36 - 45	46 - 55
Teachers	2.5	2.7	3.0
Former teachers	2.5	2.5	2.4

The transposition of table 2 into a diagram gives the following picture:

Diagram 2: the reactions of teachers and former teachers to the statement 'lately I feel more tensed than a few years ago'.

It is notable that the extent in which former teachers of various ages feel tensed shows merely small fluctuations.
Among teachers these tensions clearly increase in the course of time. In the highest age group the difference with former colleagues is even spectacular.

An explanation for this can perhaps be found in the increasing distance which people experience with the world of the young as they grow older. This gap gradually becomes wider.

Women

The results of the women confirm those of the men. The mean score of job satisfaction among female teachers and former teachers is 3.7 and 3.9 respectively, the score on the tension item 2.5 and 2.2 respectively.

Commentary

One thing has become clear from the above: the profession of teacher is notable for a relatively low job satisfaction and increasing tensions among older teachers.
When we take into consideration that the percentage of teachers in the highest age group will continue to increase over the next few years, as a result of the ageing Dutch teaching population, it is clear that the government will have to take steps. An employer cannot look on passively when it is clear that the working climate in his 'business' contrasts so unfavourably with what is customary elsewhere.

4. Comparison between teachers from different countries

Justification of the research design

For the comparison between teachers of different countries a general job satisfaction test is used, translated into the languages concerned. The test consists of 14 items (see appendix). Up to now teachers of several countries cooperate in this research and it is to be expected that in the autumn of 1986 the data of 5 countries will have been received.
There are several reasons why one should be cautious when comparing job satisfaction scores obtained from teachers from various countries:

- differences in school system (secondary education can for instance either contain one type of - comprehensive - school or different school types) mean that job satisfaction scores cannot be computed for the whole teaching population, but must computed for each subpopulation separately;
- the relation between job satisfaction on the one hand and age on the other hand means that the samples must be corrected for differences in age build up;
- teachers in different countries might react to certain statements in quite different ways. This makes it precarious to translate a test and to compare the scores obtained in the various countries. For this reason tests will be analyzed statistically for each country separately. Items which might turn out to be 'culture biased' will be eliminated. Because its high reliability and the

great number of items the quality of the test will not be seriously affected by eliminating a few items.

Results

We have already received a number of questionnaires from Germany, but we cannot say very much about them yet, because the test and item analysis will be postponed until we have received all the data.
In connection with the comparability with the results of paragraph 3, we will limit ourselves to one item: 'I am very satisfied with my profession'.

The following table gives the scores of Dutch and German teachers on the statement: 'I am very satisfied with my profession'. The number of respondents are mentioned between brackets.

Table 3

	I	II	III
Age	- 35	36 - 45	46 - 55
Dutch teachers	3.5	3.4	3.3
	(628)	(533)	(259)
German teachers	4.0	3.8	4.2
	(22)	(34)	(18)

The corrected mean score of the German teachers is 4.0 or 80% of the maximum score.
As a comparison:
Merz found a mean score of 4.19 on a 6-point scale, or 70% of the maximum score.
Krampen found a mean score of 5.75 on a 7-point scale, or 82% of the maximum score.
The big difference in the results between both is difficult to explain. It is probably connected with differences in the age build up of their samples. This again points to the necessity in job satisfaction research of correcting the results for differences in age distribution.

5. Discussion

It is generally assumed in industrial and organizational psychology that there is a clear connection between the quality of the working conditions and the quality of the results of work. There is no reason to assume that education would be an exception to this.

Research into job satisfaction of teachers is therefore interesting for two reasons:

- it gives us insight into the quality of the working conditions of a large category of employees;
- it gives us indications concerning the quality of education.

The comparison of the results with those of other professional groups, and with the same professional group in different countries can moreover give indications about factors which can contribute to the improvement of the working conditions of teachers.

Note

1. In an earlier stage of this research project this general job satisfaction test for teachers (see Appendix) has been administered to more than 2000 teachers in Holland. Their scores are used as a basis for comparison.

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Appendix

	agree completely	agree	neither disagree nor agree	disagree	disagree completely
1 For me there is no better job than that of teacher					
2 As a teacher it is difficult to find satisfaction in one's job					
3 The advantages of being a teacher are greater to me than the disadvantages					
4 I have wondered now and again whether I would have been better off if I had chosen a different profession					
5 If I could do everything over again, I would certainly become a teacher again					
6 If I got the chance I would take another job					
7 I am proud of my profession					
8 I sometimes regret having become a teacher					
9 Compared with other professions, that of teacher offers a lot of satisfaction					
10 I would never advise my son to become a teacher					
11 I am very satisfied with my profession					
12 The tensions of school often have a negative effect on my private life					
13 No profession has so many positive sides as that of teacher					
14 Sometimes I find my work very hard					

sex male

female

age -----